

Visual Artist Kathryn Schmidt: Painting

Like many artists before her, Kathryn Schmidt is intrigued by the figure and states, "My tendency is to make scenes with the figures, all the while looking for the delivering image, a painting that contains the world. ... Looking back over my work, it seems autobiographical to me in that it registers my states of mind at the different stages."

"I feel the important changes are the growth of one's ideas and the continual and (hopefully) brave exploration of themes and ideas," she writes. Schmidt notes that artistic innovation can take many forms, and mentions some of her artistic heroes. Lucian Freud, for example, steadfastly painted the figure through many years of "innovation," and his work out-lastred many of the "innovators"; or Max Beckmann, whose work still looks powerfully modern. Writer Peter Selz says of Beckmann, "He made no revolutionary experiments in painting technique but simply developed ever greater virtuosity."

"My work is evolving in that the use of figurative elements has changed over the years, the figures have gotten better, and perhaps I have been innovative in my use of the nude in that I have in recent years found some ways of using it in contemporary settings."

"And in a bigger sense, there is my revolutionary idea that art should contain ideas and should be more engaged in our culture, which is both a new and old idea."

The members of the visual arts panel saw Schmidt as a truly visionary painter at the top of her game, who connects to the anxiety of current times and channels it in her work. She tackles big themes such as married life, aging and morality. Her painting is accessible and challenging, while showing a certain vulnerability and visual poetry. She articulates an easy intermingling of regional and national themes.

